

8-93-46

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COLORADO RARE BIRD REPORT

AMERICAN BLACK DUCK *Anas rubripes*

Location: Olive Marsh; Pueblo; Pueblo County, Colorado

Date: November 26, 1993.

Setting:

This bird was found earlier in the fall of 1993 by Brandon Percival. Peter Gent, Brandon and I found it on the morning of November 26 in the Olive Marsh, in the Arkansas River below the Pueblo Reservoir dam. We watched the bird in excellent light for about 45 minutes. We used our binoculars and got as close as 30-40 yards (estimated). The bird was free-flying, had both halluxes intact and appeared in perfect plumage. It was with a flock of about 200 ducks that included Mallards, American Wigeons, Green-winged Teal and Gadwalls. Like these other ducks, the Black Duck floated in the gentle current and fed by probing the still-green vegetation growing in the river rocks.

I think that this is the same individual that has been hanging out along the Arkansas River during the last 3 winters.

Description:

The bird was a male. It was about the size shape of the Mallards with which it flocked. When the bird flew away, with Mallards, it appeared much darker, nearly black overall. It had a dark purple-blue speculum without any bordering white. It looked superficially like a very dark female Mallard. Overall it was dark brown, mottled with more golden edges to the flight and contour feathers. It had a very dark brown crown that blended into a dark nape and hind neck. The face, sides of neck and fore neck were medium brown, and finely streaked. There was a slightly darker eyeline that separated the lighter brown lower face from the light superciliary and dark crown. The face was more strongly marked than a female Mallard. The eye was dark. The bill was unmarked, yellowish-olive, with a faint orangish tone.

The paler head and neck contrasted with the nearly blackish body, but not with a sharp line of demarcation between the neck and body. The body feathers were plain dark brown with narrow chestnut, or golden, fringes. The lighter feather edges were more pronounced on the sides and upper parts. The rear end (tail, rump and undertail coverts) was so dark and plain as to appear nearly black. In flight, the spread tail was dark brown without any trace of white at the sides. It had white underwing coverts and grey-white flight feathers (from below). This contrasted sharply with the nearly black body. The legs and feet were bright orangish red and both halluxes were present.

Similar Species:

Female Mallard and other female puddle ducks do not have the contrast between blackish body and tan head and neck. The combination of unmarked body feathers, plain greenish-yellow bill, bluish-purple speculum and red legs is unique.

Experience with Species:

I have seen American Black Ducks in Illinois (1978-79), Wisconsin, and New York (1988). I have seen single male Am. Black Ducks in Pueblo in 1990, 1991 and 1992. I saw a Black Duck in Holly, Colorado in 1992.

This report is prepared from notes made during and after observation.

Mark Janos
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Colorado Field Ornithologists - Sight Record Form

- - New State Record - X - Rare bird in CO

American Black Duck (Species)

Anas rubripes
(Scientific name)

Date(s):

September 12, 1993 9:30-9:45 AM 15 minutes

September 18, 1993 8:30-8:45 AM 15 minutes

November 13, 1993 9:30-9:32 AM 2 minutes

Locality:

Arkansas River at Olive Marsh in Pueblo, Pueblo County, Colorado.

Nearest town, county and state)

Optical equipment:

10X40 Bauch & Lomb Binoculars

Spotting scope Questar

If photographed, please enclose copy. Equipment used:

Not photographed

Number of birds seen: 1 Sex: male Plumage: adult

Light Conditions:

excellent both days.

Distance from bird and how measured:

15-30 yards

Describe the bird's overall behavior:

The bird was seen on September 12 with Mallards and Canada Geese swimming and feeding along the river.

Describe the habitat in which you observed the bird:

At a river with cottonwoods surrounding the river.

Other observers who independently identified the bird
(Please list names and address):

Laura Townsend	9/12&18/93	Pueblo
Lindsay Lilly Jr.	9/12/93	Pueblo
Van Truan	9/18/93	Pueblo
David Silverman	9/18/93	Rye
Sylvia Wheelock	9/18/93	Canon City

Dave Johnson 9/18/93 Pueblo
Pearle Sandstrom-Smith 9/18/93 Pueblo
Clif Smith 9/18/93 Pueblo
Frosty Donley 9/18/93 Pueblo West
Jack Reddall 9/18/93 D.F.O.
Karleen Schofield 9/18/93 D.F.O.
Glenn & Jeane Hageman 9/18/93 D.F.O.
Ira Sanders 9/18/93 D.F.O.
Myron & Suzi Plooster 9/18/93 D.F.O.
Betty & Harold Oliver 9/18/93 D.F.O.
Jack Short 9/18/93 D.F.O.
Amy Young 9/18/93 D.F.O.
Lois Foreman 9/18/93 D.F.O.
Donna Randolph 9/18/93 D.F.O.
Mark Yaeger 10/09/93 Pueblo 11/13 CFO Field Trip
~~J&Hummel~~ ~~11/13/93~~ ~~Greely~~

Describe in great detail the bird which you saw. The field marks used to identify the bird. Include Size, overall shape, plumage, and color pattern; details on shape of bill, wings, and tail.:

Identified the bird by it's dark color, purple speculum, bright yellow bill, and by it's overall duck shape. The bird was about 23 inches the same size as the Mallards with it. The overall shape was typical duck shaped. The bird was in adult male plumage. The color pattern follows: The bill was bright yellow, dark eyes, a pale face which was much lighter then back. The bird had a black eyeline and a darker brown on top of forehead. The rest of the body was a mottled dark brown. The bird showed it's purple speculum many times on both days. The legs were orange and had their hind toes. The shape on the bill was normal duck shaped. The wings and tail were normal duck shaped.

Describe the bird's calls or sounds if heard:
The bird did not make any sounds.

List similar species and how you eliminated them:

Mallard: This species is never this dark. Also it has a blueish speculum.

Mottled Duck: This species is also not this dark. Also it has a blueish-green speculum.

Hybrid Mallard & American Black Duck: This species should have some green on the head and have a blueish speculum.

Prior experience with this and similar species:

I've seen a male American Black Duck in the area off and on since March of 1990. It is unknown if this is the same bird showing up here or if their different birds. Also I saw an American Black Duck with Mark Janos on the Holly CBC in December of 1992.

I've seen thousands of Mallards in CO.

I've never seen a Mottled Duck or a Hybrid between Mallard and American Black Duck.

Field Guides used to determine sighting:

National Geographic Society's Birds of North America

This report was written from notes made during _____
after X; from memory _____.

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